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COMUNICADO DE IMPRENSA * PRESS RELEASE * COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE

EAST TIMORESE RESISTANCE LEADER

OFFERS SUHARTO OLIVE BRANCH

Lisbon, 3 September. "We appeal to President Suharto to accept the olive branch we are offering in a gesture of our good-will so that together we try to repair the historical accidents that have affected the people of Indonesia and the people of East Timor", wrote Mr. Xanana Gusmão, the Resistance Leader of East Timor, in a message addressed to the 10th Non-Aligned Movement Summit under way in Jakarta.

This offer of peace by the legendary East Timorese leader, Mr. Xanana Gusmão, who is based in the rugged mountains of East Timor was confirmed today in Lisbon by Mr. José Ramos-Horta, the overseas spokesperson of the Resistance.

"Mr. Xanana Gusmão's peace offer is not new", Mr. Ramos-Horta said. "He is simply reiterating our collective desire to work towards peace for our people. Our negotiating stand remains the same, we are willing to enter into a process of dialogue with the Indonesian side, without pre-conditions, under UN auspices, to explore all possible ideas to end the conflict", Mr. Ramos-Horta said.

Referring to the UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali's invitation to the Indonesian and Portuguese Foreign Ministers to meet informally in New York, Mr. Xanana Gusmão said in his letter: "We reaffirm our willingness to engage in dialogue on the basis of the Portuguese proposal". In January this year, in the wake of the 12 November 1991 Dili massacre, the Portuguese Foreign Minister Mr. João de Deus Pinheiro flew to New York and delivered to the UN Secretary-General a proposal to open negotiations with the Indonesian side, with the involvement of East Timorese nationalist leaders "without pre-conditions". The Indonesian side has rejected any talks with the inclusion of the East Timorese.

Speaking in Lisbon, Mr. Ramos-Horta stated that "there cannot be peace without the victims being consulted on their future. On the other hand, we are prepared to show flexibility and statesmanship and work on a formula that is acceptable to the Indonesian side. There are at least two possibilities: we could adopt the Afghanistan proximity-talks model or we could invite in the Catholic Church of East Timor and the Vatican to take part as as active observers. The Catholic Church could very well represent the people of East Timor at least in the first stages".

Mr. Xanana Gusmão has never left the country in the 17 years since the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia. He wages a war of resistance against the Indonesian army and commands strong support throughout East Timor. He is 46 years old, a gifted writer, poet and journalist. He is married to Emília Gusmão who now lives in Melbourne, Australia, with two children.

"Mrs Gusmão herself suffered enormously in the hands of the Indonesians. She was raped, tortured, her captors playing mock executions on her in front of her two children. This went on for years to break her husband's will. She survived it all but still has visible psychological scars. Thanks to the International Committee of the Red Cross she managed to leave for Australia two years ago", Mr. Ramos-Horta said.

In his message to the NAM Summit, Mr. Xanana Gusmão urges his fellow Third World leaders to "respect human rights" and said "Indonesia cannot speak about the arrogance of the North when she defies with arrogance the UN resolutions on East Timor and refuses dialogue with the East Timorese people".

"While the people of the Third World experience hunger and the horrors of war and the regimes pursue policies of repression with the weapons acquired from the North, President Suharto of Indonesia cannot pretend to have credibility to define notions of peace, justice and cooperation", Mr. Xanana Gusmão said in his message.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Mr. Jose Ramos-Horta can be reached by phone in Lisbon at (351.1) 932 7770 throughout the day on 3 and 4 September for additional information and comments.